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ABSTRACT

The Marymount Manhattan College Community Leadership Program, which is a high risk admissions program, is taken as an exemplar of such programs. Although the author runs this program, it is considered impossible for any one person or even agency to actually run these programs. The Board of Trustees has approved the program and the necessary supportive resources. The President not only signs but contributes to the proposals, and actively supports the students and program goals. The Academic Dean follows the progress of each student and acts on her behalf in consultation with the Director and Mental Health Consultants. The Admissions Office and the Registrar cooperate in waiving many standard procedures. The Financial Aid Office assists in securing tuition grants and Work-Study positions. The Development Office seeks funds, and aids in writing proposals. And, most important, on a day to day level, it is the faculty and students who make the program run--in their formal classes, in tutorials and summer programs, and in the numerous informal contacts outside the classroom. (Author/JM)

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"THE SMALL COLLEGE OPENS ITS DOORS"

Who Runs the High Risk College Programs

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One of the questions I am frequently asked by CLP students is, "Why us, Mrs. Bertsch? Why did you come to Fort Greene?". In essence, my students are puzzled as to why the program is designed the way it is. The answer to their question reveals how a structure may emerge from numerous chance factors which converge at a given time.

This program arose <u>when</u> it did because the faculty accepted the principle that there are alternative ways to meet a given social need; and in this acceptance, the focus at Marymount Manhattan shifted from one of personal commitment to one of institutional responsibility. Prior to 1967, many faculty members and students had worked intensively in inner city centers. However, to do so, they had always left the college. While questionning college goals in 1966-67 by examining current practices, the faculty's emphasis gradually began to center on the responsibility of the institution to open its doors to invite into the college the same inner city residents.

The program took the <u>form</u> it did because of innumerable "accidents." At the risk of boring an audience with minutae, I will mention certain events, seemingly insignificant three years ago, which in fact provided the framework within which the program developed.

Leaving the college one afternoon in May of 1967, I stopped to chat with the Director of Admissions, who mentioned that, for the first time, funds were available to pay the tuition of students who could not afford to attend a private college. But she was concerned since these were the very students who did not usually apply to Marymount. At one point in our discussion, she asked, "What would you do if you had the opportunity to set up a special program?".

The answer was obviously the result of bits and pieces of my own experiences; especially six years of teaching theoretical sociology, dealing with questions of community organization and problems faced by minority groups in conflict with the dominant culture, as well as several years of pressuring students to choose research problems which are manageable with the resources, facilities and time available. I was also interested in questions examined by the mass media at that time: the problems of high school drop-outs, the pressure for community control, the assumption that the "disadvantaged" must be removed from their environment to succeed in college. And most importantly, at the time the question was raised, I was working intensively with a group of Harlem parents to secure funding for a neighborhood operated and controlled Montessori school. Their commitment was unshakeable when they came to believe that their program could make a difference in their neighborhood.

These coincidental bits and pieces placed the question of the Admissions Director in perspective. Could we set up a program that was manageable with the resources of a small college? Could a day-hop college provide sufficient academic and social supports for the students so they would not drop out? Could we capitalize on the group supports of the familiar home environment to the advantage of both the students and the neighborhood? Could we, in fact, make an impact on a neighborhood over a period of years, if we established a strong bond between college and community?

I thought we could establish such a program, if we limited ourselves to servicing one identifiable neighborhood and stopped thinking of Manhattan or of the many problems facing the entire city. I then contacted a former graduate school colleague, who was director of the Doctor White

Community Center in Fort Greene. Within a month, after days of home visits, telephone calls and meetings in her neighborhood, she had recruited our first group of CLP students. During the summer, three faculty members from the college tutored at the community center four nights a week. That September (1967), seventeen students enrolled as Marymount Manhattan College Freshmen.

Of these,one student has graduated, eleven will graduate in June, one is continuing her studies in Puerto Rico, and two students who had dropped out for a year have returned to the college. The remaining two withdrew, are married and working.

The program is entering its fourth year and Marymount Manhattan now enrolls seventy CLP students in a student body of six hundred and fifty. In addition, the community centered model was eventually adopted by six other private colleges in the Metropolitan area so that the program is now operating in seven colleges servicing approximately three hundred students. Having observed and directed its growth during this period, I am confident that the model is workable in any relatively small institution wishing to establish such a program, whether the population to be served is Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Black, Cuban, poor White or American Indian.

Long-Range Goals:

While limited in number (approximately twenty students a year) the long range goals of the program were broad. The first set of goals focused on the college and its internal dynamics. In supporting the program actively, the college consciously committed itself to broad institutional change in the composition of the student body, the faculty and curriculum.

The second set of goals focused on the relationship of the college to the surrounding urban community, specifically those residents living in

conditions of poverty, who for academic as well as economic reasons had little or no hope of attending college.

The community center provided the link between institutional and community goals. The center's staff and CLP students recruit new students, the center providing the space for a pre-college tutorial program and a stipend for students who attend our summer program. In addition, CLP students are employed by the center, helping to administer and coordinate its many programs. This summer twelve students were employed by the center for salaries ranging from $85. to $125. a week. Others worked in community action programs sponsored by Urban Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps and ASPIRA. In September, several will begin student teaching in neighborhood schools which they left only a few years ago, while others will apply for admission to graduate schools of social work and education for the further development of community leaders.

Emerging Structure:

While the program is now a highly structured one, it actually evolved over a period of three years. In our first year, it consisted solely of a group of students and five faculty members who volunteered to help with tutoring and whatever else might arise. What developed was an acute awareness of the severity of the academic handicaps, complicated by frequent personal and family problems. An academic profile of the students at that time would have catagorized them as follows:

High School Average:	Clustered in the 70's
Reading Levels:	Range: 7th to 10th grade
CEEB Scores:	Verbal: range 300-400 Math: range 250-375

Faculty members felt some confidence in working with academic problems, but as the relationship grew between teachers and students, all became

aware of the numerous additional stumbling blocks to academic success:

1. Illness, especially during the winter months, which caused absences students could not afford.
2. Frequent lateness and absences unrelated to illness.
3. Lack of money for carfare, books and entertainment.
4. Family conflicts about money, study habits and need for privacy.
5. Competition and conflicts with siblings.
6. Not only fear of fear of failure, but fear of success.
7. Frustration, depression and anger.

By the end of the first semester, it had become evident that highly trained personnel in the areas of reading development and language skills were needed to tackle such specific problems as vocabulary building, sentence and paragraph structure and the more general problem of handling abstract concepts. The students insisted that they had rarely had to write extensively while in high school, and we believed them! Critical papers baffled them, and exams frequently created such anxiety that students overslept, lost their carfare, took the wrong subway or arrived after the exam was over.

In addition, faculty members who wished to work with CLP students needed released time from some segment of their full time teaching. Those who had volunteered found they were spending twelve to fifteen hours a week, over and above their full time teaching and committee responsibilities. For example, to correct a paper <u>constructively</u> took at least three times as long as our previous experiences had indicated it would take. While no one relented, we knew that level could not be sustained for another year, especially with an additional group of twenty students.

Two additional needs remained: a director who could guide students

and coordinate faculty efforts, and a mental health consultant who could act as a counselor, therapist, interpreter, supporter and general weight lifter.

Out of these experiences grew the first proposal submitted to Title III of the Office of Education, and with it, the explicit statement of long range goals and program structure which finally emerged. The program was funded in May of '68. I asked to be named Director and was accepted by the Administration and students. We hired the needed supportive staff, greatly expanded the supportive teaching and tutoring requiring these until the student could operate successfully without it, provided released time for faculty working with the program, and secured the services (for fifteen hours a week) of an experienced psychiatric social worker with substantial training as a psychoanalyst.

At this point what we still needed was <u>time</u>. Having waived usual admissions procedures so that students could enter the college, reduced course load, provided for individualized programs and supportive teaching in Literature, Math, Science, Spanish and Philosophy, we now had to re-adjust dismissal procedures so that students would be given a chance to remain in college. One year in which to attain a C average was not sufficient.

With the cooperation of the Academic Dean and Registrar, no CLP student was dismissed for academic reasons prior to the end of Sophomore year. At this time the cumulative index was not used; instead, the student must be doing C (2.0) work by the second semester of Sophomore year. To date, only one student has been dismissed (June, '69) and she returned to the college in September, 1970, after having fulfilled certain stipulations. In reviewing the final grades of students who completed Junior year, there was great personal and group pride: not

one junior, in any course, had received a grade of less than C. In several cases B's and A's predominated.

Role of Counselors:

The term counselors is so broad and used in so many contexts that there are days when I am certain that everyone in the college is seen as a counselor - students advising each other, faculty advising students and sometimes vice versa. Within the program this is also the case. CLP students act as group leaders, serve on the program budget and advisory committees, administer the pre-college tutorial program in the community center, act as tutors, and frequently mobilize to assist each other. They are in continual (open-door) contact with the director, and with the secretary of the program who is the hub of communication. The director, in turn, spends some time in the faculty room each day, not only to advise or be advised, but to keep all lines of communication open.

The entire CLP staff - faculty, tutors, reading director, language arts specialist and both psychoanalysts now associated with the program meet each week to consider students progress and problems. We advise each other, share information which affects student's academic progress, and make suggestions on the basis of a good or bad experience with a given student. For an hour, the room resembles a "Think Tank", e.g. How would you handle...? what are we going to do about....?.

It is not fashionable today to speak of mental health consultants as indispensible to the success of such a program. More to the point, at every meeting I have attended in New York such a statement is likely to elicit the counter statement, "Black kids don't need shrinks, that's a white man's hangup." At Marymount Manhattan the psychologists are valued by Black, Puerto Rican, Cuban and Anglo-White students, as well

as by faculty and program staff. They are our experts in human understanding and communication,and as such are as available to the Dean, Department Chairmen, and faculty as they are to students.

At staff meetings they make very specific recommendations, e.g., "Let up on B. She wants to show you she's doing it because it's important to her." "You haven't stated the norms clearly at all. W thinks you don't care when you say 'that's up to you.' Tell her exactly what you want." "Go slowly with S. Leave a little distance. She doesn't trust you or any adult to come through for her. Don't promise her anything until you're certain." "H works well with an authoritative teacher. See if she can take X's course." "Look, if R insists, you've got to let her try it, even if she does fail."

They frequently advise on courses, placement of students with specific faculty members, and approaches to be used by tutors. Furthermore, they spend innumerable hours in private consultation with students and faculty, advise and support the director in her varied attempts to get students to see a doctor, arrange for new living accommodations, secure satisfactory day care for their young children, or simply get students to class on time.

With an old-fashioned team concept central to the operation of the program, the mental health of the college is the concern of the therapists. The total environment is changing as a result.

Who Runs the Program:

By any formal definition based on an organizational chart, I run the program. But that is an obvious answer, which leads to a further question, "How is it that I am able to run the program?" The answer to this reads somewhat like a list of acknowledgments prefacing a book.

The Board of Trustees has approved the program and has sanctioned doing what was necessary to make it work. The President not only signs the proposals, but reads them, commenting on them and actively supporting the students and program goals. The Academic Dean follows the progress of each student and acts on her behalf in consultation with the Director and Mental Health Consultants. The Admissions Office and the Registrar cooperate in waiving many standard procedures mentioned above. The Financial Aid Office assists in securing tuition grants and positions for students on Work-Study, in completing complex forms and in making sure students meet deadlines. The Development Office seeks funds, aids in writing proposals and establishing reasonable budget guidelines so students have the necessary financial support (not limited to tuition) they need. And, importantly, on a day to day level, it is the faculty and students who make the program 'run' - in their formal classes, in tutorials and summer programs, and by numerous informal contacts outside the classroom.

In many ways changes introduced for CLP students have now become institutional policy. When the program began all college Freshmen took a specified academic program, as did Sophomores. CLP students however, were placed in particular courses (with specific faculty members) based on their interests, abilities and chances for success during the first year. This is now college policy. It is the faculty who have taken the lead in establishing a totally new curriculum in which every student plans an individualized program with a team of faculty advisors and an upperclassman.

The faculty has also approved a major in Urban Studies, and departments have added courses in Social Work, Community Organization, Develop-

mental Reading (to train teachers to teach reading as well as assist college students), African History, Afro-American Studies, N.Y.C.: Its Black and Puerto Rican Population, Conversational Spanish for Classroom Teacher, Composition, English as a Second Language and several other courses, including Family Finance and Food and Nutrition, for students involved in programs of Community Organization.

Who, then, runs the program? No one individual, department or administrative office mentioned above runs the program. Yet, it seems clear that without the assent and active participation of each, the program would not run.

Two factors, each essentially related to size, have made significant changes possible in this college.

1. The environment is manageable, and both students and faculty have a sense that they can control what happens to them.

And the second is related to the first.

2. People are accessible. The boundaries for communication are not limited to a department. We know each other, and there seems to be a genuine feeling of shared responsibility for the functioning of the college.

Both factors lead me to question the position of director in the small institution. Marymount Manhattan is a relatively stable institution, with students and faculty who know each other, work on many committees together and frequently meet outside the classroom. Would attitudes toward the program have differed greatly if I had been a Stranger, if I had joined the college as director with the first group of CLP students who entered in '67?

Despite many shouting matches in my office, some mistakes and near

disasters emotionally, I believe one of the reasons that the program has moved into the institutional structure with relative ease is that I was a known quantity at the college. I knew and have been known by all the administrators, faculty and a good percentage of the students. I had taught in the Sociology Department for six years, worked on innumerable committees and served as Director of Admissions prior to assuming the role of Program Director. I have known where to go when a problem arose without being limited by the formal organization. The informal structure of the college is also very powerful, and I have used it during these first years, with a sense that I could approach most people with some knowledge of how they felt and operated, assured of an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

If the goal of a small college is institutional change, this factor is important to consider. Faculty resistance, both active and passive, is frequently cited as the "cause" of program failure. As frequently, wisdom is assumed to be the attribute of students and program directors. My own experiences support neither assumption. Faculty members are not supermen, though many seem to feel pressured to do the super-human. While a teacher may be an expert in mathematics or history, it can not be assumed that he is also a master of all human communication and understanding. Faculty members require as clear a statement of goals and expectations as do students. They deserve to be confirmed in what they've recognized as the real difficulties faced by students whose reading levels are several grade levels below the norm; they don't deserve accusation. A "supportive staff" must in fact support the teachers as well as the students by discussing ways in which they can assist both to achieve their goals, by following through on the commitment and reporting back to the concerned

faculty member.

Where I have observed this process in action, faculty have been "freed" to teach with the assurance that a back-up staff respects the integrity of the academic discipline as well as the human qualities of the teacher and student.

What have we learned since the program began?

1. For one thing, we know that students who were once defined as UNABLE to attend college are ABLE provided that college makes it possible by:
   a. waiving usual admissions requirements
   b. revising dismissal procedures
   c, providing the supportive teaching necessary
   d. allowing for flexible programming
   e. adding required staff where needed.
2. We know that academic standards and professional integrity do not fall apart with a different student population.
3. We know that in a small college such a program cannot function on the periphery as a "special program," but requires the active cooperation of every department and each administrative office.
4 We know the neighborhood model works with a vital community center being a key variable.
5. We know that a program of this kind is expensive. Money is needed from federal, state and private industrial sources - or every program will be an exercise in frustration.

APPENDIX I

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

CLASS OF '71	1967-1968 Freshman Year Cumulative Credits	Index	1968-1969 Sophomore Year 1st Semester Credits	Index	2nd Semester Credits	Index	1969-1970 Junior Year 1st Semester Credits	Index	2nd Semester Credits	Index	1970-71 Senior Year
1	18	1.42	13	1.56	17	0.60	Dropped				Returned
2	21.	1.45	U/Puerto Rico		13	1.0	Withdrew				
3	15	2.77	12	2.0	15	1.46	15	1.8	15	2.0*	
4	25	1.70	15	2.33	18	2.66	18	2.8	15	3.3	
5	23	2.0	15	1.53	18	1.78	18	2.5	15	2.6	
6	17	1.06	Withdrew								Returned
7	21	1.43	15	1.33	15	1.46	9	2.3	16	*	
8	Dropped										
9	26	2.40	8	1.87	17	3.0	15	3.6	15	3.8	
10	24	1.73	16	1.56	16	1.31	12.	2.0	15	3.3*	
11	24	2.08	12	2.16	18	3.27	15	2.8	16	4.0*	
12	17	1.37	11	2.0	14	1.92	12	1.75	16	3.3*	
13	30	2.93	15	2.06	18	3.13	--				
14	24	1.83	15	2.53	18	2.44	15	2.2	18	3.2	
15	20	0.8	12	1.0	12	2.0	U/Puerto Rico		Withdrew		Returned
16	23	2.0	15	1.53	15	1.27	12	2.0	9	2.6	Transferred to Puerto Rico
17	24	1.32	15	1.77	15	1.80	15	2.8	18	3.3	

APPENDIX I
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

CLASS OF '72	1968-1969 Freshman Year				1969-1970 Sophomore Year			
	1st Semester		2nd Semester		1st Semester		2nd Semester	
	Credits	Index	Credits	Index	Credits	Index	Credits	Index
1	10	1.70	15	1.80	15	1.0	15	1.8
2	12	1.0	10	1.90	14	1.9	17	3.2
3	9	0.33	12	1.25	12	1.5	17	2.7
4	12	1.00	12	1.75	18	1.5	17	2.2
5	12	1.50	12	1.25	15	1.6	17	3.5
6	9	0.33	9	1.00	15	0.6		
7	Withdrew							
8	9	0.66	15	2.00	14	2.0	14	1.8
9	12	0.75	18	1.33	15	1.8	17	1.8
10	9	1.30			9	3.0	Withdrew	
11	9	2.66	12	2.92	15	2.2	15	2.6
12	9	2.20	15	3.00	16	3.2	19	3.3
13	9	1.00	9	1.66	11	2.3	14	2.5
14	9	2.00	12	2.00	15	1.6	15	2.7
15	12	0.75	9	2.33	15	1.6	15	1.7
16	12	1.25	15	2.25	18	2.2		
17	15	1.80	15	1.60	15	1.7	15	2.9
18	15	2.40	18	3.33	21	2.8	24	3.0
19	11	1.72	14	1.92	11	1.5	14	2.6

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

1969-1970
Freshman Year

CLASS OF '73	1st Semester		2nd Semester	
	Credits	Index	Credits	Index
1	15	0.9	15	0.6
2	15	1.8	15	2.0*
3	9	0.6	12	1.0*
4	9	1.3	12	2.3*
5	15	1.6	15	1.8
6	15	2.0	12	1.75
7	9	2.3	12	2.75
8	12	2.5	15	2.7
9	9	2.0	12	*
10	12	1.5	12	2.0
11	15	1.4	15	1.8
12	12	1.75	9	1.3
13	12	1.25	12	1.75
14	12	3.25	12	3.5
15	12	2.75	15	2.75
16	12	0.5	15	1.5
17	12	1.5	12	2.0